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29 April 1966

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

INDONESIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Indonesian Communist Party

Summary

The Indonesian Communist Party has been reduced to an underground organization of unknown size. Efforts to reorganize will be carried out under highly unfavorable circumstances. Although the party will survive, its effectiveness as a national political force seems likely to be virtually nil for the next few years.

1. The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), for the third time in its history, has suffered a massive defeat. A functioning underground organization survives, but its size is not known. Efforts to reorganize will be hampered by unfavorable political circumstances including an official ban of the party and President Sukarno's loss of power, by the death of several top leaders, and by the presumed infiltration of the PKI by army informers. Although the PKI is sure to survive, its effectiveness as a national political force seems likely to be virtually nil for the next few years.

Party History

2. The PKI, founded in 1920, is the oldest Communist party in the Far East. In 1926, it staged a series of revolts in Java and Sumatra. These were easily suppressed by the Dutch administration; the party was banned; and most of its members were executed, imprisoned, or exiled.

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3. The party regained its legal status in October 1945--two months after President Sukarno had declared Indonesia's independence of the Netherlands and only a few weeks before the military phase of the Indonesian revolution began. In September 1948--while the national fight for independence was still in progress--the PKI staged a revolt against the fledgling republic. Under circumstances that have never been fully explained, Communist and pro-Communist army officers--supported by the units they commanded--seized the city of Madiun in East Java. Most Communist civilian leaders, although apparently taken by surprise, felt they had no choice but to ally themselves with and assume direction of the Madiun revolt. Anti-Communist army units suppressed the revolt in two months. Most top- and middle-echelon party leaders were either killed in military operations or summarily executed. About 35,000 persons--mostly troops who had fought with the Communists--were imprisoned. Faced by an imminent Dutch attack in December 1948, however, the Indonesian Government released these prisoners, and when independence was achieved the following year, the new government took no further action against the party.

4. After several years of confusion and partial reorganization, the PKI in 1952 announced a program of united front tactics which included strong support of President Sukarno. Under these tactics and the leadership of a youthful triumvirate--D. N. Aidit, N. H. Lukman, and Njoto--the party grew from an estimated membership of 12,000 in 1952 to a claimed membership of three and a half million by 1965. Communist front groups probably accounted for at least 15 million more. By September 1965, Sukarno's policies had become almost indistinguishable from the immediate goals of the PKI, and he appeared to be pressing toward a regime of modified Communism.

1 October 1965

5. On 1 October 1965, a group that called itself the "30 September movement" kidnaped and murdered six generals of the army General Staff. Having evidence that PKI elements were involved, the army

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placed major responsibility for the movement on the party and mounted a campaign to destroy it. By the end of the year, Aidit and Njoto were dead, and the party's overt organization was a shambles. On 12 March 1966, army commander Suharto, acting under authority granted him by President Sukarno, banned the PKI and its front organizations.

6. The precise details of the PKI's role in the events of 1 October are not known, and, as in the Madiun affair, may never be. Facts, probabilities, and presumptions about the so-called "abortive coup" have been arranged in a variety of plausible versions.

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7. There is clear evidence that elements of Communist youth, labor, and women's organizations participated in the coup attempt. Several officers of the army, air force, and police were involved. Of these, at least one--an army brigadier general--is a known Communist; several of the other military participants are suspected of either party affiliation or Communist sympathies. Circumstantial evidence is strong that at least some Communist leaders knew in advance of the plot, and that Communists were involved in directing coup preparations.

After 1 October

8. The army's anti-Communist campaign after 1 October involved mass arrests of members of the PKI and its front organization and, in most provinces, the banning of any activity by these groups. In areas where the PKI had been particularly active, such as Central and East Java, local Moslems accompanied army teams to help locate and identify Communists. As arrests mounted, executions began.

9. The army's campaign enlisted sympathetic civilian assistance throughout the nation. In strong Moslem areas, this assistance rapidly assumed a fanatical character. Moslem extremists in many instances outdid the army in hunting down and murdering members of the party and its front groups. This activity was

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particularly true of Central and East Java, the province of Atjeh in Sumatra, and the island of Bali.

10. Figures vary considerably as to the number of persons killed. Since no records were kept, an accurate figure is impossible to obtain. A government fact-finding committee deputized by Sukarno late last year to ascertain how many had died in the anti-Communist campaign reported a figure of 78,000. Unofficial estimates are considerably higher, ranging from 250,000 to 500,000, but many of these appear to be based on exaggerated information. Executions reportedly are still being carried out in East and Central Java by both the army and civilian groups, but in far smaller numbers than last year.

11. Thousands of other Communists and Communist suspects have been imprisoned. Some of these have already been "reindoctrinated" and released, but others face execution or prolonged imprisonment. Communists in the Djakarta area appear generally to have fared better than elsewhere in that no mass blood-letting has occurred there. This can probably be attributed to the fact that army headquarters has made its influence felt in the area and has emphasized interrogation and at least some discrimination between indoctrinated party members and the relatively uninformed individuals who were affiliated with party front organizations.

12. In terms of personnel losses, the party itself appears to have suffered more than its front organizations. Of the front groups, those that have lost most personnel are, logically, those that were the largest and most active--the Peasant Front (BTI) which claimed nine million members; the labor federation (SOBSI) with over three million claimed members; and the youth organization (Pemuda Rakjat), which claimed three million members.

13. Communist response to the army's campaign has been largely one of retreat and passivity. When Sukarno, after some hesitation, refused to support the 30 September Movement, PKI chairman Aidit went to Central Java. Until his capture and execution, probably in November, he seems to have spent much of his time persuading minor Communist officials not to go into open opposition.

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14. First and second deputy chairmen Lukman and Njoto stayed in Djakarta to take advantage of Sukarno's protection and presumably to direct strategy should the situation swing to the left again. In time, Njoto was arrested and is reported to have been executed, and Lukman went underground. Other Communist leaders at all levels tried to go underground in early October.

15. Only in a few areas of Central Java and in isolated instances in East Java and North Sumatra did the PKI attempt aggressive action. These efforts consisted chiefly of primitive sabotage and terrorist sorties against non-Communist civilians and not against the army. The Communists who took such action had few firearms, and there is no firm evidence that the army has discovered any significant Communist arms caches.

16. In an effort to escape army action, many local branches of the PKI and its front organizations dissolved themselves. In West Java, for example, this voluntary dissolution occurred at the provincial level. General Suharto's ban of the party and its fronts in March 1966 officially confirmed at the national level a cessation of activity that already prevailed.

What Remains?

17. M. H. Lukman--formerly the party's first deputy chairman--apparently was appointed acting chairman shortly after Aidit's death. Of the 50 PKI central committee members, at least four are believed dead and 16 are believed to be in prison. Two are in Communist China, and the whereabouts of 28 is unknown. Some of these 28 presumably constitute the present central committee. Of 29 heads of provincial or island committees, one is believed dead, 14 apparently have been arrested, and the whereabouts of 14 is unknown.

18. Certainly all but the hard core of the party for the time being has melted away, but no reliable figure for present active membership is available. Indonesian sources have suggested the figure of 100,000. The rapid growth of the PKI and

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its front organizations had been partially based on low membership requirements and, as a result, dedication and discipline presumably were transient qualities among many adherents. A clandestine organization also existed before 1 October 1965, but its strength is not known.

19. The PKI still has secret members in other parties, particularly the left wing of the National Party (PNI) and the Indonesian Party (Partindo). A formerly Communist-controlled youth group, the Concentration of Indonesian Student Groups (CGMI), does not appear to have been hard hit by mass arrests. In the past it was both a proving ground for young Communists and an active recruiting base. Some continued undetected infiltration of the armed forces must also be assumed. In the present political atmosphere, however, the PKI is unable to use any of these organizations to advantage.

20. The PKI has decided that it can expect little assistance from Sukarno, once the party's principal vehicle for gaining access to national influence. The PKI believes that Sukarno is interested only in retaining the presidency and that he will sacrifice everything to this end.

Efforts at Reorganization

21. The party understandably is encountering major obstacles in its efforts to reorganize. Aside from the PKI's massive disarray and the additional effort required to work underground, the party is further frustrated by its suspicion of increased army infiltration. The PKI believes the army is developing informers among party and party front members who are gradually being released from prison.

22. Partly as a security measure, the central committee is reported to have authorized a drastic reduction in internal party communication. [redacted]

[redacted] the 29 provincial and island committees have been granted virtual autonomy and for the time being may determine their respective courses of action without consulting the central committee or exchanging information with each other. In Djakarta, where members of the area committee itself

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are suspected of being informers, subordinate units have been instructed to avoid committee members.

23. For the time being the dominant party activity apparently is to be the continued infiltration of neighborhood associations and village committees. Although Communists have lost control of these community organizations, they still have clandestine representation in them and hope to exploit lethargic rightist leadership. This type of activity can be conducted from the cell level and requires little or no supervision.

Government Concern

24. Despite the destruction wrought upon the Communist Party, various government officials remain concerned. Their particular concern is not for the immediate future but for the period several years from now when they fear that, despite government efforts, the PKI will have succeeded in developing an effective underground organization.

25. With some 15 million persons having been affiliated with front organizations and three million with the party itself, government officials reason that despite a probably low level of dedication on the part of many of these persons, a large potential must still exist for a reconstructed party. Indonesian officials, both civilian and military, have speculated on the "vacuum in the social forces" which may have been caused by party proscription. Deputy Prime Minister Adam Malik, who has over-all responsibility for political affairs, has suggested the establishment of a left-wing party which might be able to absorb and bring into the national framework large numbers of leftist malcontents and thereby frustrate the development of a large PKI underground.

26. The government assumes the continuation of a strong Communist potential in East and Central Java, the major areas of previous Communist strength.

[redacted] PKI leadership in these regions, while presently experiencing difficulty in communicating with the central committee, is relatively intact. The government is also concerned about residual pro-Communist sentiment within

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the armed forces, particularly in army and police units which have been recruited in those areas. Units under the deepest suspicion were sent to Sumatra and Borneo last October simply to get them out of Java and away from problem areas. Presumably at some time they will be returned. Although in the meantime an effort is being made to "cleanse" them of Communist elements, some degree of residual infiltration must be assumed.

27. Further, some government officials wonder about long-term bitterness among families and communities which have lost members to army and Moslem execution squads.

Conclusions

28. The former overt organization of the Indonesian Communist Party is disrupted and demoralized, and as yet the party appears unable to take any significant steps toward reorganization. Many of the basic conditions favorable to Communist resurgence exist in Indonesia, but several factors will determine whether and how soon the PKI can exploit them. These include the extent of continued suppression by the government; the government's effectiveness in dealing with extensive socioeconomic problems, which are most acute in densely populated Java; the development of non-Communist political expression over the next few years and particularly the government's ability to avoid the political chaos of the early 1950s--caused by multiple freewheeling and irresponsible political parties; and the quality of Communist leadership which has survived or which will be developed during the next few years.

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Next 7 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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